

Anti-Sweatshop Campaign Calls on Oregon to Pass Sweatfree Bill

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Salem, OR "Sweatfree Northwest to kick-off the Oregon Sweatfree Campaign at 12noon on April 1, 2008, on the Capitol Steps in Salem. The Oregon Sweatfree Campaign will encourage Governor Kulongoski to pass an Executive Order for Sweatshop Free Purchasing for Oregon. This policy will ensure that tax money will not be spent on sweatshops. Rather, Oregon will purchase uniforms for state departments from ethical suppliers that can ensure good working conditions at the point of assembly. "We're coming together to show Oregon's commitment to ethical purchasing, said Gavin White, a core volunteer with the campaign and member of the Multnomah Democrats.

Newly appointed Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian gave his support to the crowd of activists and community members. "I agree with you we have a serious problem in this state. That problem is occurring at the expense of the often times faceless and nameless workers that make our goods...When we talk about fair working conditions, we talk about a place we can keep people safe, a place where you're not getting sick." During his time in the legislature, Senator Avakian has been a leader in civil rights and workforce legislation. The Rev. Lynne Souse Lopez of Ainsworth United Church of Christ gave a moving speech on social and economic justice, along with dedicated sweatfree advocate Arthur Stamoulis-Director of the Oregon Fair Trade Campaign. Mary Mendez-Program Coordinator for Enlace also shared testimonies from sweatshop workers in Mexico. She pointed out that sweatshops are not just a problem abroad, sweatshop conditions exist right here in the US.

Fresh from last year's successful campaign in the City of Portland, these labor, faith, student, and community leaders are building a network of support around the state to stop taxpayer dollars from subsidizing sweatshops. The Sweatfree NW campaign believes institutional purchasing allows for a practical solution by leveling the playing field for businesses that want to put an end to sweatshop conditions. "Unfortunately, sweatshops are the norm in the garment industry," says Elizabeth Swager, Sweatfree Northwest Coordinator, Sweatfree policies create a viable solution and ensure workers are treated with dignity and respect. We want Oregon to join over 180 states, cities, counties, and school districts across the country that have signed onto sweatfree policies."

"Oregon is known throughout the world as a leader in sustainability," said Arthur Stamoulis while addressing the group, "As a state that develops the programs and projects and policies that serve as models for others to follow. Clearly, the current global economy which pits nation against nation and worker against worker in a race to the bottom is not sustainable. By

championing sweatfree purchasing, Oregon can continue its role as a leader in sustainable development."

For more information about Sweatfree Northwest news and events, visit www.sweatfree.org/or or call 503-236-7916.